Pentecost

THE LEDERER LETTER

May/June 1996 Iyar/Sivan 5756

Dedicated to reaching out with the good news of Messiah and teaching about the Jewish roots of biblical faith

Shalom Khaverim (Hello Friends),

The biblical holy day Shavuot begins at sundown, May 23 this year. Christians call this day Pentecost. Because it's so spiritually significant, I'd like to share some insights about Shavuot with you, offering you a few

Points on Pentecost.

God gave his people special days on which to remember him. These days were given, as Paul wrote, *as a shadow of things that are coming* (Colossians 2:17). The clearest example is the relationship between the release pictured at Passover and the redemption completed at Calvary. The Feast of Shavuot (Weeks), also called Pentecost (Fifty), is another such shadow.

Martha Stern's painting of the Shavuot/Pentecost connection.

During Passover week, the men of Israel tied strings around the first sprouts of their wheat, marking the special crops to be later offered to the Lord on the next holy day, Shavuot/ Pentecost. They then had to wait for seven sabbaths to pass. *Seven sevens* plus one day. During these 49 days, the people of Israel "Counted the Omer" adding anticipation to the coming of Shavuot. Since seven is God's number in Scripture, and seven sevens are an even more complete number, it was as if God were saying something perfect is going to happen on this next biblical holy day.

Through the entire night before Shavuot, the men gathered and studied Torah—the five books of Moses. In the morning, they shouted, *Arise and let us go up to Zion, to the house of the Lord our God*. They would sing, I *was glad when they said to me, let us go to the house of the Lord*. These and other Psalms of Ascent (120-134) were written to be sung "going up to Jerusalem."

Led by oxen decorated with gold and olive wreaths, the procession to the holy city was accompanied by people playing flutes and other instruments. When they were close to Jerusalem, they sent messengers to announce their arrival. At the gates, the Jews living in Jerusalem said, "Brethren of 'such-and-such' a place, *shalom alehkhem*, peace be unto you."

Upon entering the city, they took their baskets to the Temple and on the mount sang Psalm 150, the great doxology—*Praise the Lord, praise God in his sanctuary.* They began with the first five verses, saving the sixth until they got into the Temple court. Then, in unison, they shouted, *Let everything that has breath praise the Lord*. Meanwhile, the Levites sang, I *will extol you, Lord, for you have raised me up, and have not allowed my enemies to rejoice over me.*

Then, with baskets of wheat on their shoulders, they read about the sufferings in Egypt, concluding with Deuteronomy 26:9-10: He *brought us to this place and gave us this land, a land flowing with milk and honey. Therefore, I now bring the first fruits of the soil which you, O Lord, have given me.* The baskets were then placed on the altar with *two* loaves of *leavened* bread.

Why two leavened loaves?

Some see in these a picture of the people Israel who were to be reminded of their sins (leaven symbolized sin). Yet, if these leavened loaves represented Israel, why two? Wouldn't one better represent the one people of God? Or perhaps twelve, as on the table of showbread, symbolizing the twelve tribes of Israel? But God chose *two* leavened loaves. Why?

Some see symbolized in the two leavened loaves the two tablets of the Law. The Law was given to Israel

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on the date on which Shavuot was to be observed. Others see a reference to the two witnesses in Scripture. The great Messianic Jewish bible scholars, Alfred Edersheim and David Baron, see in the two leavened loaves a picture of the two biblical divisions of humanity, Israel and the nations. When Paul wrote his letter to the Ephesians and spoke of a new creation, Jews and Gentiles as one, did he have in mind the two unleavened loaves of Shavuot and the new thing that happened after the Pentecost recorded in Acts 2? Possibly. Here's why I say that.

The prophet Ezekiel records an earth-shaking vision: I *looked, and I saw a windstorm coming out of the north—an immense cloud with flashing lightning and surrounded by brilliant light. The center of the fire looked like glowing metal* (1:4). This scripture is read in the synagogues on the first day of Shavuot. The Jewish pilgrims probably just heard Ezekiel's prophecy when the great miracle of Acts 2 occurred:

> *The festival of Shavuot arrived and the believers all gathered together in one place. Suddenly there came a sound from the sky like the roar of a violent wind, and it filled the whole house where they were sitting. Then they saw what looked like tongues of fire, which separated and came to rest on each one of them. They were all filled with the Ruakh HaKodesh [Holy Spirit] and began to talk in different languages, as the Spirit enabled them to speak.*
> *Now there were staying in Yerushalayim [Jerusalem] religious Jews from every nation under heaven. When they heard this sound, a crowd gathered; they were confused, because each one heard the believers speaking in his own language* (Acts 2:1-6, JNT).

What a phenomenal event. On this Shavuot, the *Sh'khinah*—the manifest glory of God—absent for 600 years since Ezekiel's day, returned. These Jews, gathered in Jerusalem from all over the diaspora—the dispersion—were in awe as they saw what God was doing on this holy day. The message would soon become clear:

Breaking the Law kills, but receiving God's grace gives life.

Paul wrote, *for the written text* [the Torah, the Law] *kills, but the spirit gives life* (2 Corinthians 3:6). Was he contradicting himself since he also wrote that the Torah was *holy, just, and good* (Romans 7:12)? No, he wasn't. What Paul meant by *the written text kills* is that it shows shortcomings, failures, and sins. The Torah is God's standard by which to judge. But, praise God, as Paul says, *the spirit gives life.*

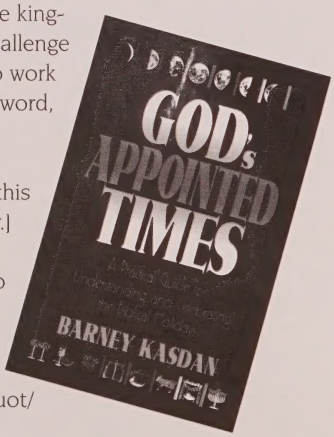
When God gave his people the Law at Mt. Sinai, all Israel acknowledged they would follow it. *The people all responded together, 'We will do everything the Lord has said'* (Exodus 19:8). This covenant was ratified with amazing signs: thunder, lightning, thick clouds, and a loud trumpet blast (Exodus 19:16), much like what happened to the Jewish believers gathered at Pentecost.

It wasn't long, however, before the children of Israel forgot their agreement and built a golden calf, bringing down the wrath of God upon them. Three thousand of God's chosen people died because they disobeyed the Law (Exodus 32:28). Is it coincidence that the first wave of Jews, born again, numbered 3,000? At Pentecost, it was as if God was saying, "Yes, I had to take the lives of 3,000 of you because you violated the Law, but now I am giving 3,000 of you eternal life through the Messiah to demonstrate my willingness to forgive. *So those who accepted what he said, were immersed, and there were added to the group that day about three thousand people* (Acts 2:41).

Peter preached that Joel prophesied about the Pentecost described in Acts 2. *Adonai says: In the last days, I will pour out from my spirit upon everyone* (Acts 2:17). The coming of the spirit had been foretold but had not been fulfilled. Peter saw the beginning of the fulfillment of this prophecy in the events of Acts 2. God was beginning his evangelistic program starting with these religious Jews who had gone up to Jerusalem for the feast. They would later spread the message to their gentile neighbors when they returned home. *To the Jew first and also to the Gentile.*

The two loaves of leavened bread were now joined together to become the one people of God. Jews and Gentiles, one in the Messiah, who would impact the world for the kingdom of God. What a challenge to us today. We need to work together to spread the word, Jews and non-Jews!

[Please see the end of this letter for a special offer.]



I'm glad you, like so many today, are interested in your Jewish roots. If you'd like to learn more about Shavuot/

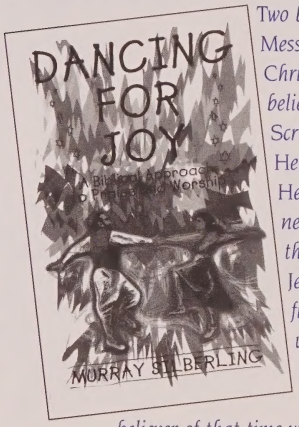
Pentecost and all the biblical holy days and their message to believers, you'll want to order *God's Appointed Times*. It discusses all the days God set apart in Scripture and their vital importance to believers.

God's Appointed Times
Barney Kasdan
Reg. Ret. $9.95; **Special price, $6.95** LB18

Now I want to share some other exciting news with you.

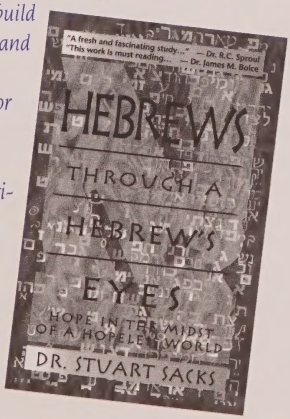
Lederer Books Get Rave Reviews

Two of Lederer Messianic Publishers' releases were recently reviewed by international periodicals. *Charisma* magazine (March, 1996) wrote,



Two books from Lederer Messianic Publishers give Christians and Jewish believers insight into Scripture and worship. Hebrews Through a Hebrew's Eyes...gives new understanding to the epistle written to the Jewish believers in the first century....a fresh understanding of [Hebrews]...and of what the Jewish believer of that time was experiencing....This book will edify and encourage all believers.

The second book, Dancing for Joy, begins with the biblical and historical foundations of sacred dance [and] suggests that there are many forms and styles of dance that can build up a congregation and bless the Lord. Everyone, clumsy or not, can learn to dance. There are instructions for various messianic dances with songs, Scriptures and meditations to praise and worship more effectively. This book is for anyone who...wants to express [joy] with the freedom of dance.



The Messianic Times (Spring, 1996) also reviewed *Dancing for Joy*:

a must for anyone who needs incentive and/or encouragement to worship the Lord in dance....the author gives a good Biblical and historical background of sacred dance....informational and inspirational....reveals that sacred dance is multi-functional: for worship, witness and warfare. Dancing unto the Lord not only symbolizes joy but releases joy. After all, one cannot dance and be depressed and discouraged at the same time. The writer assures his reader that anyone can dance, even you men! *What a blessed way for the believer to present his/her body as a living sacrifice to the Lord....useful appendices which identify and explain certain dance steps.... appropriate Scripture passages accompanied by meditations relating to dance....one of the best...a clarion call to the reader to worship the Lord in the beauty of dance.*

One of *The Lederer Letter* readers recently wrote, "I purchased ten copies of *Dancing for Joy* and require each of the dancers in our congregation to read it. It was a blessing to them all."

Now I know that some believe that dancing is inappropriate for believers. I would agree that certain types of dancing surely are. However, this theology of biblical dance demonstrates that dance *did* and perhaps *should* have a place in the worship of the Lord.

As the only full-fledged Messianic publishing ministry, it's heartening to publish products that bless so many people. We are encouraged and are bringing out more books and materials that you'll enjoy. Stay tuned!

Dancing for Joy
Murray Silberling
Reg. Ret. $8.95; **Special price $5.95** LB22

Hebrews Through a Hebrew's Eyes
Stuart Sacks
Reg. Ret. $8.95; **Special price $ 5.95** LB23

These special *Lederer Letter* discounts are good only with the enclosed order form until July 1, 1996.

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1996–1997 Messianic Jewish Art Calendar can be personalized or ordered at pre-publication prices

We're finishing work on our 16-month, 1996–1997 *Messianic Jewish Art Calendar* which begins September, 1996. The artist for this year's calendar is Peter Sherburne, a Messianic believer from England. He has captured in vivid color some absolutely exquisite Jewish scenes. And, *for the first time*, we can personalize the calendar for you.

Not only can you have the name of your congregation or ministry on the calendar (instead of Lederer's) but you can also have a full page on which to describe your ministry, display your product, show a photo, or anything else. You can give the calendar to visitors to your congregation, send it to your supporters, offer it to people with whom you'd like to share the good news. Just think of the possibilities. The minimum order for a personalized calendar is only 100. For more information on this, call Lois at (410) 358-6471.

Also, as our way of making sure you have a beautiful, devotional calendar with which to begin the school and Jewish New Year, we're making the 1996–1997 *Messianic Jewish Art Calendar* available to you for only $5 while we're in pre-publication. We expect the calendar to be available by July 1, at which time the price will probably go up to $10. So use the order form *now*. The code for the calendar is LO20

Now some more exciting news.

Recently I attended the Evangelical Christian Publishers Association spring seminar.

In addition to learning a lot about publishing and the Internet, meeting other religious publishers and hearing some outstanding talks, I was challenged by a speech given by the man who had run the Home Shopping Network, the Golf Channel, and had been involved with other major media ventures. A believer, his message to the publishers was, "We're in a war, a war for the souls of people." I agree!

That's why Lederer is positioned as the provider of Messianic Jewish "ammunition," quality evangelistic and educational material to help fight the battle to reach Jewish people with the good news and to teach Christians about their Jewish roots.

We invite you to join us in this incredibly important task. Share our materials with others. Pray for our ministry. Send a contribution if you can. We need your help to continue the many critical projects that lay before us as we serve the Lord together in these last days.

While supplies last, if you make a $15 contribution (or more) to help us in our work, we can send you a beautiful 19" x 13" color print (see cover page) by artist Martha Stern (wife of *Jewish New Testament's* David Stern). It illustrates the Acts 2 miracle set against the background of Shavuot that I just wrote about. Whether you get this before or after the holy day, you'll enjoy this artwork (a $35 value) all year long (limited availability so hurry and check the appropriate box on the enclosed Messianic Resource Order Form. The code is OO38). You'll love meditating on this beautiful art.

Shalom in Yeshua (Jesus),

Barry Rubin

Barry Rubin

P.S. SPECIAL THANKS if you've helped us reconcile our accounting records. We know this has been a bit bothersome for some people; maybe you. I want you to know we recognize this and thank you for your patience. We are about finished converting to a new computer system which will enable us to serve you better and faster. Please bear with us; we're almost finished.

P.P.S. We still offer ways in which you can enjoy some of the benefits Congress gives those with charitable hearts. If you'd like information on Gift Annuities, Charitable Remainder Trusts, and other Planned Giving vehicles, check the appropriate box on the enclosed order form and we'll send you reading material. You can help yourself, the U.S. and Lederer. Everyone wins!

P.P.P.S. Don't forget about my offer to send you one of Martha Stern's prints. It's a $35 value that we can send you for only $15. You'll also be helping us minister. Supplies are limited so hurry!